

The Heavenly Character :

OR,

THE WISDOM WHICH IS FROM ABOVE.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE BURIAL OF

MRS. ABBA HORTON,

IN

Christ Church, Ballston Spa, N. Y.,

DECEMBER 24, 1850,

BY

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and relatives of the deceased.*



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TO THE  
BEREAVED HUSBAND AND CHILDREN  
OF A TRULY DEVOTED,  
CHRISTIAN WIFE AND MOTHER,  
THESE FEW THOUGHTS,  
SUGGESTED BY HER DEATH,  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
BY THEIR  
FRIEND AND PASTOR.



# SERMON.

ST. JAMES, III : 17.

"BUT THE WISDOM WHICH IS FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, EASY TO BE ENTREATED, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, WITHOUT PARTIALITY, AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY."

Among the manifold evidences afforded us that it is the will of God, that "we all come \* \* \* \* unto a *perfect man*," two great facts are broadly and clearly marked. The one is, that He created man in His 'own image and likeness.' The other, that since we fell, whereby this image became obscured, not to say well nigh effaced, the finger of God has ever directed the eye of man to a perfect standard of holiness, as his true aim. This has always been a prominent part of that system, wherein the divine energies have been put forth to effect, in man, the complete restoration of the image and likeness of God. The Sacred Scriptures abound in exhortations which contemplate this. These, in a word, bid us "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" "be ye holy for I am holy." That such a standard may not at once seem to us

absolutely unattainable, patterns of holiness, living and departed examples are held up before us as models, and sketches are presented to us, from the pen of Inspiration, that we may fashion our lives and characters with these in view, knowing that "with God all things are possible." Above all, as an earnest of success, the Spirit of Grace is promised, to work in us "both to will and to do." Thus have we sufficient evidence of what is the will of God respecting us.

In connection with these truths, we must also bring into view the other, that is, the human side of the picture. While such is the will of God respecting us, it has been from the beginning the miserable propensity of *man*, acting under the influence of the spirit of darkness, to mar, deface and ultimately destroy the image of God in himself. Ever since he was placed in the Garden of Eden, surrounded by the most bountiful provisions for his happiness, he has followed, to a greater or less degree, the motions of the same evil one, who there misled him and spread desolation and gloom over the bright world wherein his Creator had located his existence. Those forms and pictures of holiness, those delineations of the perfect character which the divine pencil has sketched and held out before us, are marred, if not in themselves, in the results which God designs they shall effect in us. This is the work of man, acting under the continued and powerful influence of his

first great enemy. For however boldly the difficulty may be urged, that whatever God designs must be accomplished, Himself has taught us, that, in this condition of our being, there exists in the fallen spirits a real power for evil, fraught with fearful danger to us. It is a power permitted of God, for reasons which it has not been given to man to comprehend. The fact however that man thus works under this evil influence, and seems to succeed in baffling even the good purposes of God towards him, and in counteracting the intended effects of the perfect patterns, models, and sketches of holiness, which are placed before his eyes, does not touch or affect their original perfection, purity, and beauty, as the Creation and "Gift of God." They are still "perfect" in themselves. To him who contemplates them, they rise in all their full and beautiful proportions, and each one may make them his own, for study and imitation, as if none had ever done them dishonor. Not that man can become, on earth, all that God designs him to be, who commits his "way unto the Lord." For however far we may advance in this state of life, towards the "perfect man," things, as yet not seen or heard, are kept in store for us. No man can here attain unto that "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," which is none the less, however, the true and legitimate aim of the Christian; "for there is no man that sinneth not." In this life, the beginning



is made. The perfect pattern is held out before us. We go on towards perfection. We "grow in grace," by virtue of our union with Christ as branches of the Living Vine, as members of the Church, which is His Body. To him who perseveres, the victory shall be given through our Lord Jesus Christ. What God wills and designs, shall be accomplished in *him*.

In the light of these truths, let us contemplate that sketch of the Christian character, which is presented in the text.

"The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

As we must at once perceive, the teaching of the Divine Mind here, is that he who makes the "wisdom which is from above" his own, catches its spirit, and lives by its laws, is distinguished by these qualities and graces. This is God's own sketch of what a Christian should be, and of what a true Christian is, in aim, if not fully in his life. That "wisdom which is from above," adopted, applied, and made the rule of life in its form and in its spirit, produces saints who are "pure," "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." These are the fruits of heavenly wisdom. They are the notes and evidences of its presence. This, as a whole, is one of



those sketches of what God would have us to be, which He places before us for our study and imitation. They, whose is "the wisdom which is from above," are therefore "*first pure.*"

Man, since the fall, is an impure being. He is stained without and within. By nature "the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually." But it is the design of God that he shall be cleansed "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." To effect this, the Holy Spirit has been given to take possession of the whole man, and by His sanctifying influences to cleanse and purify the heart, thus making it meet for His own residence. Under the mighty hand of this Divine Agent, "they that are Christ's" are delivered from their state by nature. They are made "pure." They put away earthly things and become heavenly minded. They "set" their "affection," "not on things on the earth," but on "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

"*Then*" they are "*peaceable.*" The blessed Savior is the "Prince of Peace." Those in whom He dwells are therefore "peaceable." "As much as lieth in you," He tells us by the mouth of an Apostle, "live peaceably with all men." Christians are charged to "follow after the things which make for peace." They may not be contentious, revengeful, or soon angry. But their dispositions, and their

hearts, are to be always towards and for peace. They are indeed to be "valiant for the truth;" and when they plant themselves upon the firm foundation of the true faith of Christ, and are assailed thereon, and persecution arises, they do not lose their character as disciples of the "Prince of Peace." To their charge cannot justly be laid the sad results, which have ever been wrought by the hatred of those, who will not receive "the truth as it is in <sup>the</sup> Jesus." St. Polycarp was "peaceable," while his persecutors surrounded him with noise and tumult, and in their fury bound him to the stake and reduced his body to ashes, and thus set his spirit free. St. Stephen was "peaceable," when, calmly looking up into Heaven, he yielded up his spirit into the hands of the "Lord Jesus," while his murderers "gnashing on him with their teeth" were stoning him to death. St. John was "peaceable," who suffered, if it were possible, in a more cruel manner. And so were St. Paul and St. Peter "peaceable," although they were set upon again and again by an offended multitude, and at last violently put to death. Nay the Blessed One Himself, although He was "dumb and opened not His mouth," was railed at, mocked, scourged, spit upon and crucified. It is not therefore an evidence that a Christian man is not in the true and holy sense "peaceable" because he is the victim of hatred and violence, because noise and persecution beset him. Nor can he innocently in the sight of God gain that reputa-

tion among men by treachery to the truth of God. This is indeed to make merchandize of the honor of God and appropriate the unholy gain to self exaltation ! What, may we under the false and specious pretence of liberality, barter, as in trafic, religious truth, which is not ours, but God's ! This is not that true road to peace marked out by Christ, and which was also faithfully walked in by the "Glorious Company of the Apostles," by the "noble army of Martyrs." If need be Christians are to suffer for the truth's sake. They are always to bear persecution patiently, "for this is the will of God." Doing their duty in that station of life to which God has been pleased to call them, sincerely desiring and constantly living and acting with a view to the Glory of God, they will ever leave the fearful responsibility of all bitterness, wrath, anger, evil-speaking, malice and unholy contention, with those by whom they are assailed, themselves being in the truest and highest sense "peaceable."

Then a kindred grace, which, as a sweet odour, is exhaled from that of which we have been speaking, is "*Gentleness*." "The wisdom which is from above is gentle." The gentleness of Christ is the great pattern. He, who "did not break the bruised reed" nor "quench the smoking flax," whose "doctrine dropped as the rain," whose "speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," He it is,

who, by the mouth of an Apostle, enjoins us to be "gentle towards all men." Thus to "live and move" among men in acts of love, in doing good to those who hate us and in instructing the "ignorant and them that are out of the way," is to fill up for ourselves an important feature in the divine sketch of a heavenly character. There must be "gentleness" towards those who oppose themselves, "gentleness" towards offenders, and "gentleness" while we boldly stand forth before men as "Soldiers of Christ." For "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual;" and thus, and thus alone, are they "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds."

Then another note or evidence that the character has been formed, moulded and imbued by the "wisdom which is from above" is this; "*Easy to be entreated*," not inflexible where grave considerations are presented, but always willing to give to them their just weight of influence, not unapproachable, forbidding and repulsive, but willing to lend an ear to the claims of truth and humanity; having a readiness to listen to the tale of misery, not desirous to avoid opportunities of doing good by repelling the first approaches of those who present objects where liberality will bless both the giver and receiver. This is essential to the Heavenly Character. For without it none could attain to the next feature which is to be "*Full of Mercy and good fruits*." It is not possible



for a Christain to live by the laws of religion, or of nature even, who fails here. He cannot please God whose heart is not warmed towards those "who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity." "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Of the "good fruits" which the branches of the vine Christ Jesus bring forth, deeds of mercy and charity, towards those in need, are conspicuous.

Then these deeds must be wrought "*without*" that "*partiality*" which characterized the Jew. The love and good will of Christians are to be as broad as the wants of the human family. The principle set forth in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, is to be the guide and rule of life. And none of those distinctions, however important they may be in themselves, but which cannot annul or affect the fact of a common humanity, may be the ground of passing by or refusing relief to a sufferer. Nor is selfishness to be, as it too often is, the root of "partiality," for, says our blessed Lord, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same?" Not that there is not to be a tender, and it may be, a special regard for those who are bound to us by the ties of a common brotherhood in the Body

of Christ. For this is indeed the divine rule, "while we have time, let us do good unto all men, and especially unto them that are of the Household of Faith."

Lastly, the whole life is to be "*without hypocrisy*." The outward life must proceed from a deep inward reality. The act must be truthful from its first conception in the mind to its final outward accomplishment. The Christian must be a true man, sincere, and without a show of that which he knows he is not in heart and purpose. The mere pretence of piety, which is a mockery of God, is loathed by him. It is abhorrent to the whole genius and spirit of that religion which deals deeply and truthfully with realities alone.

This, brethren, is the outline or sketch of what a Christian should be, in life, and character. While Holy Scripture abounds with such sketches, drawn under every variety of circumstance, representing the heavenly character under many figures, each suggestive of thoughts and meditations peculiar to itself, and each requiring that "all Scripture" which is "written for our learning" be studied in connection therewith; in contemplating *this*, we may say that a character which answers to the one here represented, has been formed under the moulding influences of the Spirit of God. It is of the Gift of His Spirit that "the wisdom which is from above" takes up its abode

in the creature and darts forth its rays of light and vital warmth through the affections, the understanding and the will, yea, throughout the whole man. It is the Spirit of Him "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed" and of Him only, which can form such a character. And when it is formed, it is, we humbly conceive, with two conspicuous relations in view. The one is for itself, that it may become meet for the heavenly life. The other for the glory of God among men, that men may see not only the body of commandments and statutes, the written sketch, the ideal model, in the Word of Inspiration, but may also behold the living witness for God, may contemplate the living production of the Great Sculptor, trace the living lineaments of a divine creation, behold in human form a realization of the design of God, and feel the power of visible and active holiness. It seems evident that this is one of the objects which God has in view in the living, moving, breathing, acting works or creations of His Spirit. This is one of His ways of displaying to men the "beauty of holiness." He designs that men shall thus be attracted to the paths of virtue. Thus he beckons us to follow those who have "followed Christ." The narrow way Himself has marked out. And as we journey on in this "way" which leadeth unto life, He designs that it shall be, as it is, cheering to us to



trace the foot-prints of another who has gone before us on the journey. These are visible up to "the hour of death;" beyond that, the spirit's flight is trackless.

Although what we call human excellence is of a limited character, although the design of God is never perfectly wrought out here, and the image of Christ is not yet fully formed in "them that are saved," as it will be when at the last, on the judgment day, they shall enter "the Jerusalem which is above" in robes of spotless purity; yet, speaking relatively we may sometimes say, as did our Blessed Lord, when He saw Nathaniel coming unto Him, "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." We may point, nay, it is our duty to point you to those bright examples of Saintliness, whose virtues it would be well for all to imitate. And it is not, my brethren, because justice to the deceased at this time demands it, for that is already the tribute of every heart, but that her example may be held up for imitation, that I attempt to give expression to your own estimate of her virtues as "a child of God." And I pray that I may speak with calmness and discretion, for I myself am also a mourner, as a neighbor, a friend and a Pastor.

And now beloved, I desire no more truthful expression of what I would say of the departed one, than is afforded us in the text. "Pure," "peaceable," "gentle," "easy to be entreated, full of

mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." And why may I say this? Let us "give to the Lord the honor due unto His name." It is because she made "the wisdom which is from above" her choice and her portion. And had our deceased sister and friend reached forth to the attainment of these virtues and graces as her sole and exclusive aim, it does not seem to us that her success could hardly have been more complete.

"First" she was "*pure*." Sanctified from her birth of "water and of the Spirit" by baptism in her infancy, her mind was early turned towards heavenly things. Having been "transformed by the renewing of" her "mind," she was heavenly minded, which it is impossible to be without purity. Her daily life teemed with evidences that she was seeking "first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness." None knew her but to be convinced that she was of the number of those of whom the Saviour said "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

"Then" she was "*peaceable*." Firm in her adherence to the doctrines of the Cross as set forth by the Church, "in quietness and confidence was her strength." Convinced, for herself, that the claims of the Church are rooted in the Sacred Scriptures, realizing the duty and blessedness of a holy obedience to her order and worship, and walking thine

paths prescribed by the Church with conscientious strictness, and with the fervent zeal of true love, she was yet at peace with all. None could charge her with losing sight of the Apostolic precept, "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." While her charity was that which "rejoiceth in truth" it did not lose that characteristic whereby it "hopeth all things." She therefore judged no man. And it seemed as if it were the thought of her heart, "to his own master let him stand or fall," but "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord," as His Children in His Church. And then she was "peaceable" in another sense. She did not promote or encourage violations of peace in others; much less did she seek to cause them. She was one with whom the contentions alone could be at disagreement. She was a center which those who were at variance could mutually approach and be at ease.

She was "*gentle*." Yea, she was gentleness itself, and thereby had she won many hearts. Those, which now beat in sorrow before me, will bear witness with me how widely the influence of her gentleness was felt.

She was "*easy to be entreated*." It was one of the effects of her gentleness that she was so. It was not her custom to repel worthy applicants for alms. Nay, she was incapable of so doing. She was moved by appeals made to her for such aid as it was in her power to render. She gladly responded to the calls

which the wants of the Church from time to time make upon her members. And those whose thankless task it has been, as occasion has required, to gather the offerings of the congregation for the increase of the usefulness and efficiency of the Church, always approached her with an alacrity and certainty of success, and of a cheerful welcome, which were never disappointed; for,

She was “*full of mercy and good fruits*,” “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” And we know assuredly, as both the letter and spirit of Inspiration teach us that this work “is not in vain in the Lord.” By her open handed benevolence, by “distributing to the necessities of the Saints,” by liberal contributions to the Church, “by kindness,” “by charity,” by “love unfeigned,” by “hospitality,” though singularly free from ostentation, did she “let” her “light so shine before men” that we saw her “good works” and do now give the glory to our “Father which is in Heaven.” But in all this,

She was “*without partiality*.” She went farther than the rule of the world which teaches to love those only who love us, as did the Publicans. The lamp of her love was lighted at the flame of His, who “loved us while we were yet sinners,” who “sends His rain on the just and on the unjust,” who is “good to the unthankful and the evil.” It was hers, after the example of Christ, to sympathize with those who were “desolate and oppressed.” While

according to the Apostolic rule those of the "Household of Faith" were her special care, this did not prevent her from doing "good unto all men."

And finally, I need hardly repeat the words in the presence of those who have known her in the various walks and relations of life, but the terms of my text bring me to say, she was "*without hypocrisy.*" An influence went forth from her which can be exerted and protracted and increased in power, only as there is in the heart a Fountain of Truth and sincerity. Such a fountain alone can send forth such streams, and continue to do so more and more abundantly. The hypocrite, seeming to be what he is not, may exert a transient, momentary influence, may draw others towards himself in deference and it may be in admiration, as a thing of a day. But that influence cannot abide, and flourish, year after year. The light, which it sheds, cannot grow brighter and brighter until it passes from earth in its fullest brightness, fullest as compared with its preceding degrees, unless it has, in truth and reality, been lighted of God.

Such, beloved was the religious life and character of the deceased, as it has come under my own observation. There was an instinctive sense of its truthfulness in the mind of him who contemplated it. Hers was a religion of calmness, truthfulness, and pure devotion. Accustomed to the gathering of the household circle around the family altar at morning



and evening ; seizing the hours of leisure for religious reading and meditation, from a fondness for such holy exercises, she also realized that "God dwells in the Assembly of His Saints, yea, there He hath a delight to dwell." She loved worship as such. She loved worship because God was its object. She loved it because it has ever been the distinguishing characteristic of all the holy of the ages that are passed. "Seven times a day," says David, "do I praise Thee ; because of Thy righteous judgments." Failure of strength alone detained, and finally altogether prevented her from coming up to the Courts of the Lord's House, whither at every opportunity she had habitually directed her steps. But human infirmities can no longer debar her from participating with kindred spirits in the united worship of God. And throughout eternity, we humbly trust, there will be to her a continuation of this her highest joy ; for in Heaven all are worshippers, and they shall "go no more out forever," and worship shall be ceaseless. And thus while she was, as we have said, of the number of those of whom the Saviour declared "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," and of those of whom He said "blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God," she was also numbered with those of whom the Psalmist said "blessed are they who *dwell* in Thy house ; they will be *always* praising Thee."

These were some of the fruits she bore, because she dwelt in Christ and Christ in her, because she was a branch of the vine Christ Jesus. They were the "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." She bore them, not of herself, but through Christ who strengthened her. The "wisdom" by which she lived, was that "which is from above." And she has gone from us "not trusting in her own righteousness but in" the "manifold and great mercies" of God, in the "Lord our Righteousness," in Him, whom "God hath made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption.

And what remains to me to say more, my beloved brethren, except to entreat you to emulate the virtues of the deceased? To those especially who were her fellow-worshippers before this Altar, to those who have, so often, here knelt by her side to commemorate the dying love of that Saviour, with whom, being "absent from the body," we reverently and devoutly trust, she is now "present" in the spirit, to you above all others do her life and example rise up with commanding and persuasive eloquence. They are worthy, as they plead for, your imitation. In ages gone it has been said, and so it has always proved, that the blood of Martyrs is the seed of Saints. And when one martyr after another passed to his reward the number of the Saints of the Most High here increased, and the Saintliness of all took a higher tone, and became



more unearthly, so now, I pray God that from the death of this one of our number, of His Mercy He may grant that a new and vigorous Christian life may spring up to us all; that many may catch that spirit of deep and constant devotion which was hers, be "crucified to the world" its "poms and vanities" as she was crucified unto it and them, and may imitate her purity, peaceableness, gentleness, kindness, mercifulness, disinterested faithfulness and sincerity. Thus shall God overrule our loss, which now seems irreparable, to our spiritual gain. And may those, who were dear to her in life, and who we believe are now dear to her as she looks down from the abodes of the blessed, go on in those paths of religion and virtue, wherein she was wont to cheer them by her presence, and encourage them by the influence of a holy walk in their midst. Persevere unto the end, and, as time is passing, reflect, and be sustained as you reflect, that after a brief period, when God wills it, you shall be re-united where holy and joint worship shall again be your chiefest delight. And when, brethren and friends, each one and all of us shall be called to bid adieu to the scenes of earth by Him who gave us our life, may we so have lived, in the fear and service of God, that our last words shall be as were hers, uttered with pious fervour, in unshaken faith, with the prospect of an immediate realization of a long cherished hope in Christ. May we, when the journey of life is ended, like her

be able to look steadfastly up into Heaven, and in joyful anticipation of heavenly bliss, utter words like those which were last on her lips, "Come, come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

ALMIGHTY GOD, WITH WHOM DO LIVE THE SPIRITS OF THOSE WHO DEPART HENCE IN THE LORD, AND WITH WHOM THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL, AFTER THEY ARE DELIVERED FROM THE BURDEN OF THE FLESH, ARE IN JOY AND FELICITY; WE GIVE THEE HEARTY THANKS FOR THE GOOD EXAMPLES OF ALL THOSE THY SERVANTS, WHO HAVING FINISHED THEIR COURSE IN FAITH DO NOW REST FROM THEIR LABORS. AND WE BESEECH THEE, THAT WE, WITH ALL THOSE WHO ARE DEPARTED IN THE TRUE FAITH OF THY HOLY NAME, MAY HAVE OUR PERFECT CONSUMMATION AND BLISS BOTH IN BODY AND SOUL, IN THY ETERNAL AND EVERLASTING GLORY, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.



